

**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES - DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
ADULT JUSTICE, HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION SERVICES**

COUNTYWIDE HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

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PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To provide a description of the Countywide Housing Assistance Program and the eligibility criteria for each component.
- 1.2 To provide the process and procedures for applying for the program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

- 2.1 The Countywide Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) provides funding to assist mental health consumers without the financial resources to afford the move-in costs associated with moving into permanent housing; purchase the household goods needed to start a home; and/or avoid an eviction due to an unexpected financial hardship.
- 2.2 The Program is composed of four components: Security Deposit; Household Goods; Eviction Prevention.
- 2.3 The Security Deposit Assistance and Household Goods components target consumers who are moving into permanent housing after having been homeless.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: Applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- 3.1 Homeless as defined by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development.¹
- 3.2 Currently receiving mental health services from a DMH directly operated or contracted agency.
- 3.3 Proof of sufficient income to reasonably sustain the monthly expenses associated with maintaining permanent housing including but not limited to rental cost, utilities, and food.² Proof of income should be dated within 60 days.
- 3.4 Capable of living independently as assessed by the case manager.
- 3.5 Eligibility is limited to once every twelve months for move-in and eviction prevention assistance. Financial assistance for household goods is limited to a lifetime allocation of \$600.
- 3.6 Recipient of a Section 8, Shelter Plus Care or other housing subsidy (desirable but not mandatory.)

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PROGRAM COMPONENTS and OTHER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- 4.1 **Security Deposit:** provides financial assistance for applicants who are homeless and do not have the means to pay the required **security deposits** at the time of leasing the apartment. California Law restricts the total security deposit to be no more than the amount of two months' rent. However the Housing Policy & Development Unit (HP&D) will authorize payment for deposit on the negotiated amount stated on the Letter of Determination from the City or the County Housing Authority. Payment may also be authorized in situations when additional deposit payment which exceeds two times the monthly rent is requested in compensation for tenants' poor credit history. Similar requests will be considered on a case by case basis by the Division Chief or Program Head of the Housing Policy and Development Unit.
- 4.1.1 If an applicant is required to utilize 70% or more of their documented monthly income for their monthly rent, the case manager must submit a letter, signed by the case manager and program manager, explaining how the applicant will be able to maintain the rental unit and other related expenses. This letter must accompany the application packet, otherwise the application packet will be considered incomplete.
- 4.1.2 If the applicant is a recipient of a Federal housing subsidy, the application packet must include the Letter of Determination or the Lease Approval from the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles respectively.
- 4.1.3 Upon receipt of the application, the referring agency will be notified within 2 working days if there are any incomplete or missing documents. The referring agency will have 15 calendar days from the initial date of contact to complete and submit any missing documentation. After 15 calendar days, the application will be returned to the referring agency.
- 4.2 **Household Goods:** provides financial assistance with purchasing necessary household goods such as appliances and furnishings for applicants who are moving into permanent housing from homelessness. However, if a non-homeless applicant is in need of household goods due to extenuating circumstances, the case manager may submit a letter, signed by the case manager and program manager, explaining the extenuating situation. Each situation will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

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4.2.1 The Household Goods Program will be administered in two categories:

- 4.2.1.1 Merchants Invoicing
- 4.2.1.2 Gift Cards (Target and Wal-Mart)

4.2.2 For both categories, eligible applicants will be allocated a one-time maximum amount of \$600.

4.2.3 Merchants Invoicing:

- 4.2.3.1 Present pre-selected items detailed on a merchant's invoice or listing from online shopping with the total purchase price including taxes and other associated fees with the application for Household Goods.
- 4.2.3.2 A program representative MUST accompany the applicant when purchasing the pre-approved items upon receipt of the check. Checks are NOT to be given directly to the applicant.
- 4.2.3.3 When purchasing household goods, the case manager can only purchase those items that have been submitted with the application and was pre-approved for purchase.
- 4.2.3.4 When utilizing a check for payment, if the pre-approved items cost less than the amount approved, the case manager must return all change with the receipt.
- 4.2.3.5 The original receipt must be submitted to the funding agency within one week of purchase reflecting the pre-approved items.

4.2.4 Gift Cards (Target and Wal-Mart)

- 4.2.4.1 The case managers/housing specialists are required to send in application for Household Goods items when they are certain that client have a move in date.
- 4.2.4.2 Applications should be submitted with pre-selected items detailed on the selected merchant's invoice or listing from online shopping with the total original purchase prices including taxes and other associated fees.

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- 4.2.4.3 Upon approval of application the Case Manager/Housing Specialists will be invited to come to HP&D and collect the cards for the purchase of the selected items from the designated store. Disbursement of gift cards will be available after notification.
- 4.2.4.4 Case managers will be required to sign an acknowledgment confirming receipt of gift card along with a log sheet specifying the serial numbers of the gift cards issued.
- 4.2.4.5 Within 5 days of collecting the gift cards the Program representative MUST accompany the applicant when purchasing the pre-approved items. Gift cards are NOT to be given directly to the applicant.
- 4.2.4.6 When purchasing household goods, the case manager can only purchase those items that have been submitted with the application and was pre-approved. In order to avoid an unused balance of \$20 or less, the case manager will assist the applicant in selecting additional household item (s) to ensure a zero balance on the gift card. Any unused balance greater than \$20 or less than \$20 if there are no additional items to be purchased will be returned to HP&D.
- 4.2.4.7 The case manager will not be able to collect cash refund if gift card amount is not fully utilized.
- 4.2.4.8 The original receipt and the Gift Cards Distribution Control Logs with client's signature must be submitted to HP&D within 7 days of purchase reflecting the pre-approved items. Documents may be faxed in pending the receipt of the originals. If documents are not returned per guidelines, future disbursements will not be made to that case managers until complete documents are received.
- 4.2.5 Financial assistance for household goods is not allowable for persons who are relocating from one independent living situation to another.
- 4.2.6 Allowable purchases under this program component are indicated below. If a specific item is not included, the referring agency may submit a letter explaining why the item is needed. Each request will be reviewed by Housing Policy & Developing Unit staff on a case by case basis.

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* See Attached Suggested Purchase Limits

* Not to exceed the maximum amount of \$600 for Appliances, Furniture and other expenses

Furniture		Appliances		Kitchenware		Linen		Other	
Bed up to (including mattress/box spring)	*\$350	Stove	*\$350	Plates	*\$35	Sheets	\$10	Mop	
Couch end and Coffee Table	*\$300	Refrigerator	*\$450	Flatware	*\$16	Towels	\$8	Broom	
Lamp	\$25	Microwave	*\$60	Glasses	*\$15	Pillow	\$10		
Dining Table w/chairs	*\$100	Vacuum Cleaner	*\$40	Cooking Utensils	*\$20	Blanket	\$60		
		Television	*\$300	Pots & Pans	\$40				

4.3 Eviction Prevention: provides the one time payment of one month's rent in arrears and any reasonable late fees as indicated in the lease agreement. The payment is made to the landlord to avert a possible eviction. Applicant must be able to pay regular monthly rent once arrears have been paid.

4.3.1 Applicant can not be more than one month in arrears in rental payments.

4.3.2 Applicant must have been served with an eviction notice – 3 or 30 day notice.

4.3.3 Applicant must provide proof of a minimum of 6 months of occupancy at that location.

4.3.4 Applicant must be able to show proof of sufficient monthly income to maintain the regular monthly rent.

PROCEDURES:

5.1 The Countywide Housing Assistance Program is administered by the Housing Policy and Development (HPD) Unit within Countywide Housing, Employment, & Education Resource Development Division (CHEERD). The HPD Unit works in conjunction with directly operated and contracted agencies to assist consumers with securing permanent housing, purchasing household essentials, and preventing evictions. Implementing this program requires the combined efforts of various Departmental Units/Divisions and community-based clinics (both directly operated and contracted agencies) working in concert to assist applicants. Responsibilities and duties will include but not be limited to the following:

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5.1.1 Referring Clinic/Agency:

- 5.1.1.1 Developing policies and standards of how the program will be implemented in their specific clinics with a designated contact person.
- 5.1.1.2 Conducting housing searches to assist with the identification of potential housing options.
- 5.1.1.3 Negotiating with property owners to obtain a reasonable security deposit (should not exceed two times the monthly rent); avert an eviction; and accept a third party payment through the Department of Mental Health with a completed W-9 form.
- 5.1.1.4 Obtaining required documentation from local housing authorities to confirm Federal housing subsidies.
- 5.1.1.5 Completing the application packet.
- 5.1.1.6 Forwarding the completed original application packet to HPD Unit, Attention: Omoyi Mvuemba at 695 S. Vermont Ave. 10th Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90005. (Fax number 213-637-2336.)

5.1.2 HPD Unit:

- 5.1.2.1 Reviewing the Countywide Housing Assistance Program application packets.
- 5.1.2.2 Contacting the referring clinic within two workdays of receipt of application packet to report any incomplete or missing documents.
- 5.1.2.3 Processing the W-9 through the eCAPS system to verify tax identification number and creating a vendor codes.
- 5.1.2.4 Preparing the application packet for review and approval by Division Chief.
- 5.1.2.5 Forwarding payment requests to the Accounting Division for processing.
- 5.1.2.6 Providing technical support to referring agencies as needed.

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5.1.3 Accounting Division:

- 5.1.3.1 Processing payment requests.
- 5.1.3.2 Communicating any problems with the payment request to the designated contact person.
- 5.1.3.3 Confirming the receipt of the check by the vendor within the designated 7 day period.

¹ Not applicable to the Household Goods and Eviction Prevention Components

² Monthly rental amount should not exceed 70% of documented monthly income